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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/NCE, EUR/RPM

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SUBJECT: DAS DICARLO ENGAGES ON REGIONAL ISSUES IN LJUBLJANA

Classified By: COM Thomas B. Robertson for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In October 3-4 meetings with EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo, Slovenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Bozo Cerar, and chief international affairs advisor to the Prime Minister, Andrej Rahten reiterated Slovenia's support for the work of both the UN Special Negotiator Ahtisaari and the Contact Group on resolving the question of independence for Kosovo in 12006. Both stressed the importance of moving ahead with Ahtisaari's proposals, as delay would cause more problems than it might solve. Maintaining a euro-Atlantic perspective for the entire region, but especially Serbia, was also high on the Slovene agenda. Echoing Prime Minister Janez Jansa's recent comments to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Cerar predicted that if Kosovo independence were resolved by the end of 2006, by the end of 2008 we could see significant peacekeeping troop reduction in the region. In her meetings DAS DiCarlo delivered a strong message on the need for the U.S. and EU to send a clear and unified message to the Government of Serbia about the need to prepare itself and its public for the inevitable independence of Kosovo. Progress in other parts of the region and the potential for bringing Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro into the Partnership for Peace were also discussed extensively. Slovenia is prepared to contribute technical assistance to the entire region through its Center for European Perspective (CEP), but it does recognize there may be financial and political limitations to overcome. End Summary.

Kosovo - Don't Delay

12. (C) In separate meetings on October 3, EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo met with Deputy Foreign Minister Bozo Cerar and International Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Andrej Rahten to exchange views on the way ahead in the Western Balkans. Both conversations focused heavily on Kosovo, its impending independence and how to convince Serbian political leadership of the need to prepare itself and the public for this immanent change. Cerar and Rahten both urged that Ahtisaari and the UN move forward sooner rather than later on a decision on Kosovo. A long delay would only cause further instability in Serbia and, they feared, could spill over into Bosnia. They echoed Prime Minister Janez Jansa's assessment given to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in late September, that PM Kostunica, an admirable dissident in his day, was no longer able to provide the kind of strong, moral leadership Serbia needs, and the outcome of Serbian elections, should

they happen, would have no positive effect on the process. Kosovo was not let off the hook, however, as both expressed the need to keep Pristina focused on its responsibilities vis-a-vis minorities and other standards it needs to meet. Cerar also predicted (as had PM Jansa in late September) that if Kosovo independence were resolved by the end of 2006, by the end of 2008 we could see significant peacekeeping troop reduction in the region.

Serbia - Keep Euro/Atlantic Perspective

13. (C) Both Cerar and Rahten agreed with DiCarlo's assessment that an EU and NATO perspective must be kept alive for Serbia, and that ICTY cooperation is of paramount importance.

Given the hurdle of handing over war criminals, they discussed how Slovenia and others could help Serbia to meet this responsibility and not become discouraged by talk of EU enlargement fatigue and lack of access to the resources of transatlantic partnership. DiCarlo urged the GOS to continue reinforcing the message with their Serb counterparts that the EU is of one mind and in sync with the US on the independence of Kosovo. Additionally, Serbia must face this reality and do what is necessary to prepare for the future without Kosovo and within the EU and NATO. Rahten discussed a "Food for Thought" paper on possible measures to be taken in support of Serbia that Slovenia had drafted with the V-4 and Austria and discussed in mid-September in Austria. The paper contains a variety of concrete measures that can be taken bilaterally and regionally, such as student exchanges and closer involvement in existing regional partnerships, that would encourage the government as well as the population to see its future in Europe. Slovenia has pledged to keep the Western Balkans on the EU agenda and will certainly make it a primary focus of its own presidency in early 2008.

Bosnia - Ready for Prime Time?

14. (C) Discussion of recent Bosnian elections centered on whether the candidates, and particularly Dodik of Republika Srpska (RS), could put the rhetoric behind them and get on with Constitutional and other necessary reforms. DiCarlo told Cerar and Rahten that the decision to terminate OHR would be made in February, and the effectiveness of the Bosnian presidency and government between now and then would factor into that decision. Rahten expressed real concern over the renewal of the RS-Serbia Agreement on Special and Parallel relations. Tying it to the Kosovo decision, Rahten thought if that decision were delayed, it might further embolden the RS-Serbia relationship in a negative direction. He was not very concerned, however, about the ability to work with Bosniak leader Haris Silajdzic, referring to Silajdzic's stints as Foreign Minister and Prime Minister as positive indications for his future behavior.

Montenegro - Optimistic Outlook

15. (C) The overall tone on Montenegro was upbeat and positive. Cerar and Rahten agreed that Montenegro's cooperation with ICTY was positive and that, all things considered, it was a very good candidate for PfP. There was also agreement that the problem of organized crime would need to be seriously tackled. Slovenia is preparing to receive the President of Montenegro in Ljubljana the week of October 9 and plans to offer technical assistance on training of diplomats and/or civil servants, depending on what the Montenegrins request. Cerar was very hopeful that Montenegro would soon be considered for PfP, saying that it could provide a stimulus for Serbia to also do what it can to get on board.

NATO - PFP - RIGA

¶16. (C) Cerar and Rahten both stressed the importance of keeping the NATO doors open to the Western Balkans and perhaps moving ahead (without Serbia) on bringing Montenegro and Bosnia into PfP. In a separate meeting with DAS DiCarlo MFA Director of the Office for Security Policy, Stanislav Vidovic, said that NATO needed to develop a common position on the future of the Western Balkans and ideally this would be done by the Riga Summit. He also said it would be very important for NATO, during the Riga Summit, to send a strong message that it had its own policy on enlargement and as countries filed the requirements for membership, they would be given full consideration. Vidovic stressed that while compliance with ICTY was a serious prerequisite, it was important not to leave Serbia behind, and ways would have to be found to encourage democratic forces and not "humiliate" Serbia as others passed it on the path to NATO. DiCarlo explained that the USG fully appreciated the need to keep Serbia moving forward and though PfP was not currently an option, we were doing a great deal bilaterally to help reform and modernize the Serbian military. She urged Slovenia to also engage more bilaterally as a way to keep Serbia focused on a Euro-Atlantic future.

EU - Keeping the Doors Open

¶17. (C) A theme which ran throughout the two days of DAS DiCarlo's visit was the desire to "keep the doors to the EU open" for Serbia, Croatia and the other countries of the Western Balkans. The GOS has said consistently that it will make this a top agenda item during its presidency of the EU in early 2008. Slovenia believes membership of the rest of the former Yugoslavia in the EU and NATO is the only true guarantee for peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Center for European Perspective

¶18. (C) In a separate lunch with MFA Director General for Bilateral Affairs Bogdan Benko, Director of the Office of South Eastern Europe, Leon Marc, and Program Manager of the Center for European Perspective, Denis Risman, DiCarlo discussed with the group ways in which Slovenia could engage most effectively in the region, and practically, in areas where the USG has to be careful about leaving too strong a mark itself. DiCarlo mentioned the need for the Government of Serbia to do a better job on public relations and preparing for the public for Kosovo's independence. She suggested this as an area where Slovenia might be able to engage, particularly with civil society, and where it is difficult for the USG to do so. Risman agreed that Serbia could use some help in this area. He added that while Slovenia might be able to work on that type of issue with Serbia, there could be some resistance from Belgrade to receiving this sort of assistance from a country which only 15 years ago was a quiet backwater of a Belgrade-centric Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, Risman sees great potential for technical assistance in Serbia, Kosovo and the rest of the region. In addition to training CEP is preparing for Kosovar civil servants, it has had requests for diplomatic training from Montenegro. There are plans for a program on energy cooperation underway, which would be held in December and is a joint project with local think tank ISS. Risman made a strong pitch for joint projects in the region and particularly Kosovo and Serbia. Both Cerar and Rahten also promoted CEP as a good vehicle for the transformation of the Western Balkans into stable, prosperous, westward looking countries.

¶19. (U) DAS DiCarlo has cleared this cable.
ROBERTSON